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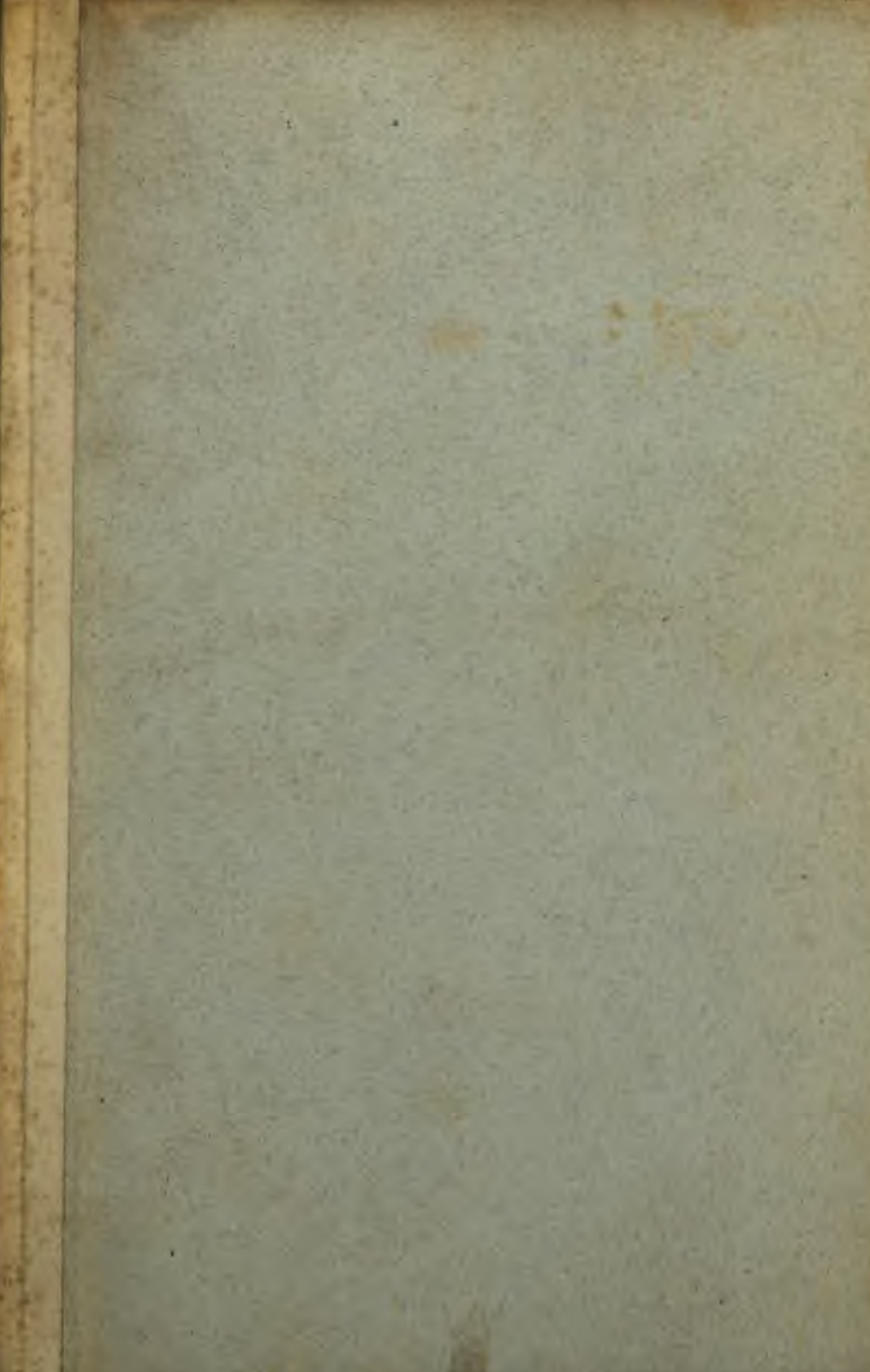
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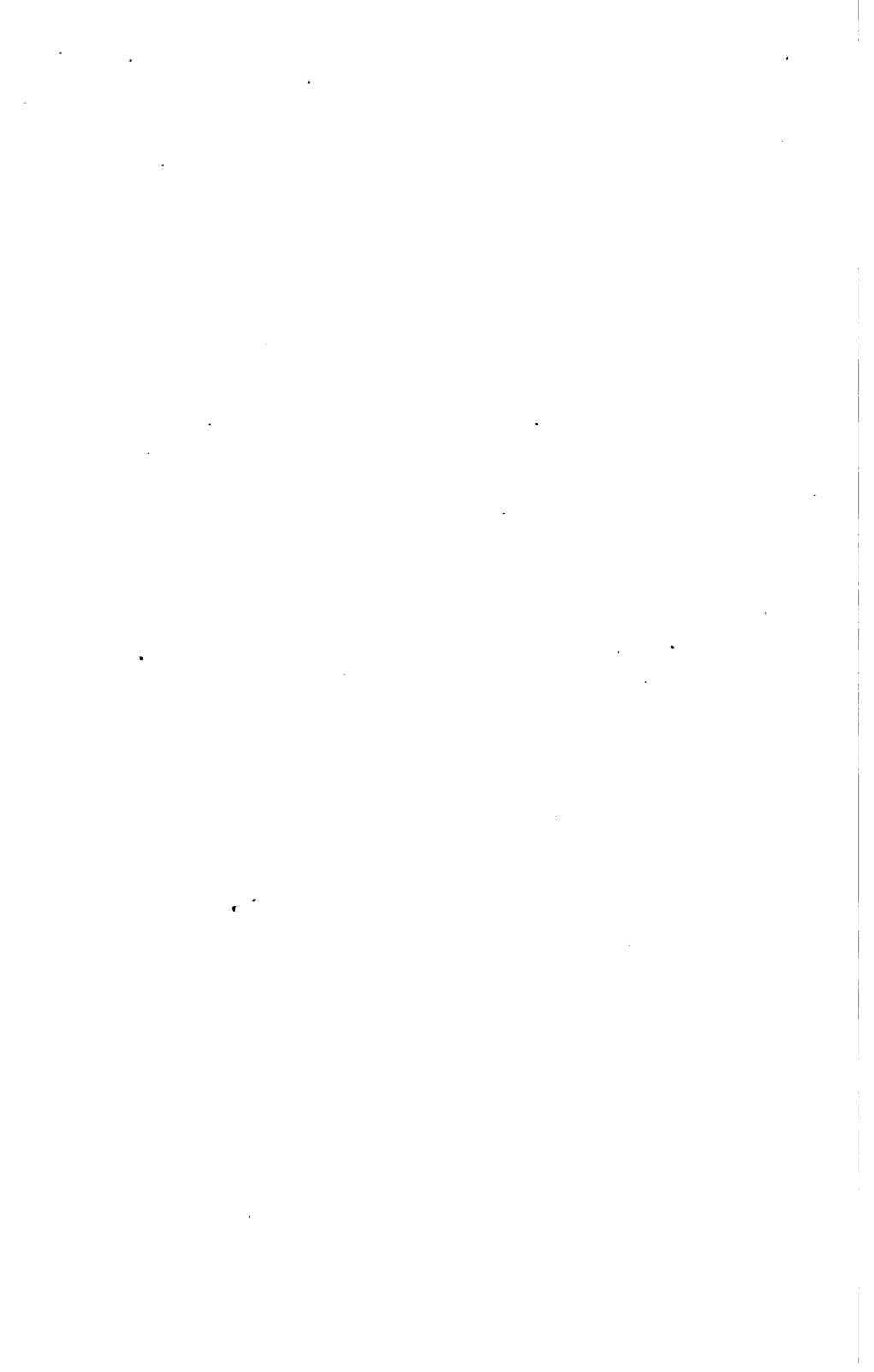
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RATIONAL VIEW



OF

HEBREW CHRONOLOGY.

Reprinted from THE JOURNAL OF SACRED LITERATURE AND
BIBLICAL RECORD *for October, 1864.*

LONDON:
WILLIAMS AND NORGATE, 14 HENRIETTA STREET.

1865.

1070. e. 2.

LONDON :
MITCHELL AND HUGHES, PRINTERS,
WARDOUR STREET.

A RATIONAL VIEW OF HEBREW CHRONOLOGY.

THE present state of opinion respecting the chronology of the Bible is far from satisfactory. Several of those writers who, it is presumed, would not, on any account, be considered in the slightest degree enemies to revelation, have made such professions and admissions as appear to the writer of the ensuing pages calculated to shake the entire foundation of true belief, not only in that subject, but in the rest of Scripture. Grant that there are serious errors in the Bible, on one branch of its records generally, and it may be questioned whether it is possible to set any bounds to unbelief in any other point of its contents, but those which every man may be inclined to prescribe to himself.

If the celebrated English moralist had flourished in our time, he would have had no occasion to remark the paucity of those who take the trouble of thinking for themselves. His observations on life might have led him to a very opposite conclusion. He might with much more reason have complained that there are multitudes of all classes who decide very positively and very pertinaciously, of their own minds, questions on which they possess information very inadequate for forming a tolerable judgment. There is not an opinion, however sacred, but is disbelieved on all sides, upon very partial and superficial inquiry. If it were asserted, for example, that it is reasonable to believe that the world was created by an almighty and intelligent Being, and that He published to mankind a written system of divine instruction for the guidance of His rational creatures, from one state exposed to infinite misery, to another of as inconceivable felicity, it would be impossible to flatter ourselves that such opinions would not be met in some quarters with ineffable contempt. If it were further affirmed to be credible that the divine mind presided over the composition of the volume, so that it contains every doctrine and every fact which are necessary for the instruction of men in their preparation for an everlasting state of existence; and if it were, moreover, asserted that all which it does contain, from its beginning to its end, is reasonably believed to be almost unexceptionably a relation of truths and facts worthy of an infallible Being, without any disguise or concealment of knowledge, but such as might be expected to be observed within it, there exists a minority, though it is to be hoped a small one, in whom such opinions would excite a smile of scornful derision. In spite, however, of all this opposition of

science or philosophy, we embark on our enterprize in a firm conviction of the truth of these asseverations, and in the full belief in the existence of an ability in the world to defend them against all assailants, if it were necessary or expedient to encounter such a host of adversaries. And in the deepest persuasion that the Bible is inspired and perfect in its nature, barring slight errata which may have crept into the text through the inadvertency of transcribers, we resolutely declare that as it is highly credible, and would have been perfectly reasonable to anticipate, that God would cause a book to be written as the very best means that invention could devise of continually conveying divine information to successive ages of the world, so upon the same principle it is perfectly agreeable to reason to believe that the providence of God would take care to preserve the book from all errors of considerable importance for the benefit of those who would avail themselves of His wise and gracious provision for their salvation, and that in consequence, the book which has been delivered down to our times, and promises to survive for all future generations, is correct as well as true in all its particulars, except as far as the almost unavoidable inaccuracy of copyists may have introduced little more than inappreciable imperfections.

Much has very recently been written in support of this theory by very able champions of the truth on many points, but there is one subject on which little or nothing has been advanced, upon what may be called the orthodox and faithful side of the question, and it is hoped the following pages may supply an apparent defect in the publications of the times.

There is no more serious objection brought against the belief of the composition of the Scripture under divine influence than the discovery of any presumed internal contradiction to itself, or any similar inconsistency with undisputed phenomena of nature. It is under this conviction that certain appearances in the chronology of Scripture have been converted into arguments against its accuracy, and therefore against its veracity and inspiration. It is the design of this article to prove that it is worthy of belief that, in this very point of dispute, our Bible in its original language is to be depended upon as a narrative of truth.

Now it is alleged by writers, the grounds of whose opinion deserve investigation, that reasons exist which are sufficient to induce doubts upon the point of a very serious nature. The greatest stumbling-block in the way of an implicit confidence in the chronology of the Authorized Version of the Old Testament is the shortness of the period between the deluge, which is said

to have happened 2348 B.C., and certain events which are recorded in heathen and particularly Egyptian history. There are other objections, but of a subordinate character. It will facilitate a concise and clear discussion of these prejudices against the Hebrew verity if we classify them under the three following heads, which will include all the most important points necessary to be taken into consideration.

I. The chronology derived from the history and monuments of the Egyptians.

II. The arguments professedly connected with the Septuagint Version, the Samaritan Pentateuch, and the works of Josephus, and the testimony of early Christian, Jewish, and Pagan writers with reference to those particular authorities.

III. The supposed proofs contained in the Bible itself, of its own incorrectness considered relatively to extraneous evidences, and absolutely with its own revelations.

We will consider them, and we hope sufficiently, in the order of the above arrangement, but before we begin we will shortly describe one of our modes of managing the case.

It is not consistent with the brevity which we study, in this defence of our faith, to reproduce very much of the discourses of previous writers. We shall have to draw rather copiously from their statements, but it is no part of our intention to verify either the accuracy of their quotations or the fairness of their deductions. Opposite courses would neither be convenient to ourselves, residing at a distance from many books of reference, nor be, as it appears to us, by any means an indispensable expenditure of time and labour, nor tend to the production of a compendious and inexpensive treatise for all classes of readers. We do not vouch for the defensibility of every item we extract from the discourses to which we shall refer, but we shall accept the assertions of the most respectable writers, nothing doubting that they are correct in the gross; and as we shall treat both sides alike, in that respect, we shall not, we trust, be justly chargeable with undue partiality. We shall, where we think it necessary or expedient, dispute their inferences. We are answerable for nothing but what we maintain on our own authority, and it will be enough for us to form right conclusions from such premises as we deem a sufficient basis for human judgment.

I. Now, first, as to the Egyptian chronology compared with that of the Hebrew text of the Old Testament. This chronology is represented as widely different from the Hebrew, and especially in a period of the Hebrew which is much disputed on other grounds. There are two ways of looking

at the matter. This chronological system may be regarded, abstractedly from the alleged disagreements, on its general claims to respect relative with those of the Hebrew system; and also on the respective titles to belief of the internal specific differences themselves. It will conduce to something like perspicuity if we confine ourselves, first, under this head, to the abstract consideration of these opposing claims, and reserve particulars to subsequent paragraphs.

Now, in viewing these two systems abstractedly from any of their internal differences,—*on the one hand* we behold, in the Hebrew, a chronology which professes at least to speak without ambiguity, and generally with great precision, a chronology of a most singular people and of a most extraordinary volume; a people who alone claim to have lived under the instruction and direction of the one true God, and a volume which claims to be composed by divine inspiration, and both whose demands have been allowed by the great majority, at least, of learned philosophers and divines: *on the other*, we see a system of chronology, dating from the remotest and darkest ages of antiquity, of a profane people of heathens and idolaters, who have been left entirely to their resources, negligences, and devices; a chronological system too of which its learned patrons confess, as well as its learned opponents proclaim, that it is very far, indeed, from precise, and so full of uncertainty, that it can with great difficulty be understood, in any intelligent manner, by all the ingenuity of its interpreters.

But this adverse statement to the Egyptian chronology, ascribed to its supporters and opponents, we must, before we proceed to other considerations, substantiate by competent evidence. And to this effect (we take his remarks nearly in their own order), one of the adherents of the Egyptian chronology declares, "The Egyptians do not appear to have had any common era. Every document that bears the date of a year, gives the year of the reigning sovereign, counted from that current year in which he came to the throne, which was called his first year (p. 505). Egyptian technical chronology gives no direct evidence in favour of the high antiquity which some assign to the foundation of the first kingdom. The earliest record which all Egyptologists are agreed to regard as affording a date is of the fifteenth century B.C., and no one has alleged any such record to be of any earlier time than the twenty-fourth century B.C. The Egyptians themselves seem to have placed the beginning of the first dynasty in the twenty-eighth century B.C., but for determining this epoch there is no direct monumental evidence (p. 506). The materials for historical chronology are the monu-

ments and the remains of the historical work of Manetho. Since the interpretation of hieroglyphics has been discovered, the evidence of the monuments has been brought to bear on this subject, but as yet it has not been sufficiently full and explicit to enable us to set aside other aid. We have had to look elsewhere for a general framework, the details of which the monuments might fill up. The remains of Manetho are now generally held to supply this want. (The three or four lines here omitted will be given subsequently.) The information Manetho gives us in the present form of his work is, however, by no means explicit, and it is only by a theoretical arrangement of the materials that they take a definite form. The remains of Manetho's historical work consist of a list of the Egyptian dynasties, and two considerable fragments, one relating to the shepherds, and the other to a tale of the Exodus. The list is only known to us in the epitome given by Africanus, preserved by Syncellus, and that given by Eusebius (p. 506, 507). These present such great differences that it is not reasonable to hope that we can restore a correct text. The earlier portion seems to represent parallel lines, the later a succession; the evidence of the monuments leads to the same conclusion,—kings who unquestionably belong to different dynasties are shewn by them to be contemporary. In the present state of Egyptology, this evidence has led to various results as to the number of contemporary dynasties, and the consequent duration of the whole history (p. 507). The evidence of the Egyptians as to the primeval history of their race and country is extremely indefinite. The absence of any important traditional period is very remarkable in the fragments of Egyptian history. These commence with the divine dynasties, and pass abruptly to the human dynasties. The latest portion of the first may, indeed, be traditional, not mythical, and the earliest part of the second may be traditional, not historical, though this last conjecture we are hardly disposed to admit. In any case, however, there is a very short and extremely obscure time of tradition, and at no great distance from the earliest date at which it can be held to end, we come upon the clear light of history, in the days of the pyramids. The indications are of a sudden change of seat, and the settlement in Egypt of a civilized race, which, either wishing to be believed autochthonous, or having lost all ties that could keep up the traditions of its first dwelling-place, filled up the commencement of its history with materials drawn from mythology.”^a

^a Dr. Smith's *Bib. Dict.*, art. *Egypt*, p. 505—507, 509. V. note (*), p. 9.

And, here, secondly, to continue our vouchers for the statement we have made as to the difficulty, if not impossibility, of extracting any intelligible and definite system from the chronological records of Egypt, another of the adopters of the Egyptian chronology, in preference to the Hebrew, makes the following acknowledgments: "The Egyptian monuments contain no continuous chronology, and no materials from which a continuous chronological scheme can be framed." [Adding, in a note, "the history of the dynasties preceding the eighteenth," says Mr. Stuart Poole, "is not told by any continuous series of monuments. Except those of the fourth and twelfth dynasties, there are scarcely any records of the age left to the present day."*] M. Bunsen also says of the Egyptian monuments, "Such monuments cannot, indeed, compensate for the want of written history; even chronology, its framework, cannot be elicited from them."^c "The possibility of constructing such a scheme depends entirely upon the outline which has been preserved to us of the Sebennytic priest, Manetho, who composed a history of Egypt under the early Ptolemies. This outline is in a very imperfect condition, and the two versions of it, which we find in Syncellus, and in the Armenian Eusebius, differ considerably." "It is allowed on all hands by M. Bunsen, no less than by others, that no chronological scheme of any real value can be formed from Manetho's lists until it be first determined either which dynasties and monarchs were contemporary, or what deduction from the sum total of the dynastic years is to be made on account of contemporaneousness." "Even with respect to Menes" (the pretended earliest king); "and the supposed date of B.C. 3892" (Lepsius), "or 3623" (Bunsen), "for his accession; on what does it in reality depend?—not on any monumental evidence, but simply on the supposition that in a certain passage (greatly disputed) of Syncellus, he has correctly represented Manetho's views, and on the further supposition that Manetho's were absolutely right. But is it reasonable to suppose that Manetho had data for determining, with such exactitude, an event so remote, even if it be a real event at all, as the accession of Menes?" ("Whether Menes was an historic personage at all may reasonably be doubted. It is not pretended that he left any monuments.") "It is plain and palpable, and, moreover, universally admitted, that between the ancient monarchy (or rather monarchies) of Egypt and the later kingdom, there intervened a time of violent disturbance—the period known as the domination of the Hyksôs,—during which the native Egyptians suffered

* *Biblical Dictionary*, vol. i., p. 509.* *Egypt*, vol. i., p. 32.

extreme oppression, and throughout Egypt all was disorder and confusion. The notices of this period are so vague and uncertain, that moderns dispute whether it lasted five hundred, six hundred, nine hundred, or two thousand years. Few monuments belong to it. It is extremely doubtful whether an Egyptian of Manetho's age, honestly investigating the records of the past, could have carried on chronology, with any approach to exactness, beyond the commencement of the eighteenth dynasty, which effected the expulsion of the Hyksôs, or shepherd kings." "Let it be granted that Manetho honestly endeavoured to collect and arrange the lists of kings in the several states among which Egypt was parcelled out: what a task was before him! Royal monuments, or dynastic lists, of better or worse authority, might give him the names of the monarchs, and the number of years that each had borne the royal title. But, as 'association' was widely practised in Egypt, two or three, or even more, kings occupying the throne together, it would have been a work of extreme difficulty, without full and detailed records, which can scarcely be supposed to have generally survived the Hyksôs period; to make out, from the length of the reigns, the duration of any dynasty, and to determine what dynasties were contemporary, and what consecutive, would have been a still harder task. It is extremely doubtful whether Manetho really made any effort to overcome these difficulties."^d

And now, thirdly, after having extracted enough, we think, from the writings of those who are most friendly to the Egyptian chronology, in defence of our assertion of its unintelligibility, to make that defence complete, one of the most learned and excellent opponents of that system, who has expressed his

^d *Aids to Faith. Pent.*, § 17. ("We subjoin, for the satisfaction of the curious, an account of the mode of reasoning by which a writer, who is so sensible of the imperfections of the Egyptian chronology, is induced, notwithstanding, to prefer it to the Hebrew. "Turning to the evidence of ancient history and tradition, we find the numbers of the LXX. confirmed rather than those of the Hebrew. The history and civilization of Egypt and Assyria, with Babylonia, reach to a time earlier than in the first case, and about as early as in the second, the Hebrew date of the flood, whence the numbers of the LXX., up to the deluge, would seem to be correct, for an accidental agreement can scarcely be admitted. If correct, are we, therefore, to suppose them original, that is, of the original text whence the LXX. version was made? This appears to be a necessary consequence of their correctness, since the translators probably were not sufficiently acquainted with external sources to obtain numbers either actually or approximatively true, even if they externally existed, and, had they known, it is scarcely likely they would have used it in the manner proposed. On the whole, therefore, we are inclined to prefer the LXX. numbers of the deluge, and as consistent with them, and probably of the same authority, as those before the deluge."—*Biblical Dictionary*, p. 320.

thorough contempt for the authority of the monuments, and of Manetho himself, in a long dissertation (much the greater part of which would well repay the labour of perusal), takes, so to speak, for the text of his discourse, this very remarkable passage from Eusebius: "We are directly informed by him," says he, "that Manetho voucheth this as the main testimony of his credibility; that he took his history from some pillars in the land of Seriad, in which they were inscribed in the sacred dialect by the first Mercury Thoyth, and after the flood were translated out of the sacred dialect into the Greek tongue, in hieroglyphics, and are laid up in books among the revestries of the Egyptian temples, by Agatho-dæmon, the second Mercury, the father of Tat."

So much for confessions and declarations, touching the subject in debate, proceeding from opposite partisans.

Now, without thinking at this moment what are the special internal differences between these two authorities, the Hebrew and the Egyptian chronology, that we may come to the point at issue immediately, to prefer the chronology of the Egyptians to that of the Hebrew Bible, is to give the preference to profane vague traditions descending from the earliest and darkest periods of heathenism, over a definite chronology which has strong pretensions to divine authenticity; and we assert that on this *primâ facie* view of the case, it is a preposterous preference, or, at least, a preference not agreeable to reason. We maintain that it is neither more nor less than reasonable, if we consider the comparison thus abstractedly, without examining the internal claims of either system, to believe the book which has almost universally established among the learned its title to divinity, rather than the works of unassisted heathens, and more particularly of a nation proverbial for mysticism, however ingenious they may have been in any of the arts of life, during the primitive ages of antiquity.

We know that it is alleged, even by one of those anti-Hebraist writers whom we have already cited, that a comparison with the monuments has shewn that Manetho drew his information from original sources, the general authenticity of which is vindicated by minute points of agreement;^f and by the other, that Sir Gardner Wilkinson inclines to place the accession of Menes about B.C. 2690,^g and that both the versions of Manetho's list agree in representing Egypt as governed by thirty dynasties of kings from Menes to Alexander, and the same number of the years which

^e Bishop Stillingfleet's *Orig. Sac. Eccl.*, 11.

^f *Bib. Dict. Egypt. Hist. Chro.*, p. 506.

^g *Aids to Faith. Pent.*, p. 256.

they assign to these dynasties is a little above (or a little below) five thousand, and that the monuments have proved, with respect to those lists of Manetho, that (speaking generally) they are historical—that the persons mentioned were real men, who actually lived and reigned in Egypt.⁴

But from these proofs of the reality of the persons, and of the truth of the records of Manetho, in consequence of their agreeing with the monuments, we are constrained most entirely to dissent. Indeed, only one page after this profession, the latter writer has avowed that it may reasonably be doubted whether there ever existed such a king as Menes.¹

The concurrence of Manetho's list, and of the monuments, certainly proves one thing. It proves the truth, in part, of what we have but this instant read concerning him from Eusebius, that he obtained his information from the monuments. And it shews further, that his records of dates are not of independent authority; that they are of no more value than the testimony of the monuments; and that the authenticity of his dates and facts depends entirely on the pillars; that of those of the pillars, agreeably to his own attestation, depending on the god Mercury. So indefinite and uncertain, not to say fabulous, must be much of the Egyptian system resting on these foundations. We cannot ourselves, for the life of us, perceive the wisdom of opposing to the God of Heaven the heathen god Mercury, as of superior authority; nor to the book of Genesis, and its definite records, the most probably mythical traditions of the obscurest antiquity in defence of dates inscribed on pillars, nobody knows when, and by nobody knows whom.

We deem it, on the contrary, perfectly reasonable to prefer the chronicles of Moses to these authorities on this abstract view of the case, and to maintain that preference; unless, on internal examination, the system of the Hebrew must appear to be indisputably incorrect, and can be truly understood only in agreement with what may be shewn by some legerdemain to be the Egyptian theory.

But we can perceive no necessity for either of these hypotheses. We have stated that the difficulty in the minds of our opponents lies in the Hebrew date of the deluge (2348 B.C.), not affording, in their judgment, a sufficient length of time for the origin and progress of Egyptian arts and civilization. We believe, on the contrary, that the two thousand years which, on the assumption of the Hebrew chronology, must have expired before the age of Manetho, and not the same interval which preceded the

⁴ p. 253.

¹ *Aids to Faith.* Pent., p. 254, and note.

history of Herodotus, was an abundant space for a heathen nation to have wandered in mythological error, without the light of history, and, according to the Bible, to have commenced vast works of art and ingenuity at even an early point of that protracted era. For we see, on the authority of our Sacred Volume, that the immediate progeny of our first forefather were probably inspired by God with a knowledge of various arts necessary for their comfort and convenience; and we deem it probable that, as far as was requisite, the same blessings were bestowed on the descendants of the first family who survived the flood. But our authority, in other respects, exceeds probability. We observe, that that family must have possessed great knowledge of at least naval architecture, and that when, probably, little more than two centuries had elapsed from the time of the construction of the ark, the people presumed on the skill to design and to execute the most ambitious of human edifices. We perceive also, from the same records, that the population of the earth, by virtue of the longevity of man, related in the eleventh chapter of the book of Genesis, might have been soon after increased to hundreds of thousands, and have, in a great proportion, migrated, on the general dispersion, to a land where they indulged their lofty aspirations in the erection of those pyramidal structures which are the wonders of the world, and of other monuments which bear the inscriptions of a fabulous antiquity.

We are, therefore, not obliged, in this case, to have recourse to any alteration of dates to reduce our Bible to consistency, and the Egyptian progress within the range of credibility. And as there is no insuperable objection to the accuracy of the Hebrew record, we hold it reasonable for Manetho to yield the palm of truth to Moses, and the monuments of Egypt to renounce all pretensions to rival the veracity of the book of Genesis.

II. If the slightest preponderance inclines the Egyptian scale, it must be owing to the addition of matter derived from extraneous authorities. Such authorities are alleged to exist in the works of Josephus, the Samaritan Pentateuch, and most especially in the Septuagint version of the Hebrew Bible. These are all witnesses against the original of the authorized English translation.

It would be thought, probably by persons acquainted only with the origin, the age, and the recent verof the Septuagint, with the genuineness of the Samaritan ^{and by such}, and with the credibility of Josephus as an historian, ^{and the} their united opposition to the Hebrew text, in any particular department, must be sufficient to excite, at least, reluctant doubts of its accuracy in the mind of the believer. They might naturally expect that

they were witnesses in perfect agreement against the disputed original, and that they were each of them of very credible integrity. And, no doubt, if no evidence could be discovered against the purity of their own texts, and if they were all united in their testimony against our Hebrew Bible, their reputation and agreement would cast a shade of discredit upon its fair pretensions. It would not be easy to see how we could reasonably place secure reliance upon the correctness of the Hebrew text on the points in dispute, except by suspecting that there was some conspiracy in early times against its system. But nothing can be well further from the truth than either of these suppositions. The three opponents to the Hebrew text are, none of them, above not suspicion only, but disbelief. They are all open to very serious charges of corruption. Veracious as Josephus is as an historian, and correct as he probably was originally as a chronologer, his text, at the present day, is, in the latter respect, proverbially full of inaccuracies. Professor Fausset very properly pronounces it "a mass of confusion and inconsistency."^a That the Samaritan Pentateuch again has been tampered with is so certain, that Bishop Walton does not hesitate to reflect on the idea of the purity of its text with derision and contempt,⁴ and even Dr. Hales presumes that he has detected in it the grossest forgeries in chronology itself.⁵ We are inclined to be little less sparing in our censure of the text of the Septuagint; but are contented, at the present moment, only to observe that one of the most startling and convincing facts in connexion with these three witnesses against the Hebrew verity is, that they all differ very materially from one another in the controverted points of its chronology. There are not two of the witnesses that "agree together." Two, at least, of the three most certainly have been corrupted on the very article in question. Their contradictory testimony would be fortunate to escape, in a court of justice, a prosecution for perjury, and will not be, for a moment, allowed at the bar of our own conscience.

But, though we dismiss these three witnesses thus summarily in their collective capacity, it must not be concealed that most strenuous efforts have been exerted to establish the claims of the Septuagint individually above all its competitors, including the Hebrew itself. The Septuagint allows six or seven hundred more years than the Hebrew for the indulgence of Egyptian imaginations, and, short, the pretended assertor of chronological truth agrees with its literal emanation from its divine

^a *Sac. Chron.*, p. 23.⁴ *Prolegom.*, xi., 17.⁵ *Hist. Chron.*, vol. i., § ii., v., 1.

Author. It is contended that the Hebrew text was much more likely to be corrupted than that of the Septuagint, and on arguments which may certainly appear very convincing, if they are considered separately from any objections to which they are justly liable, but appear to us no less certainly almost as light as air when examined by those equitable criterions.

We believe that we shall do full justice to the cause of our opponents, if we display to the reader all the most formidable attacks on the Hebrew chronology of probably the most determined and most laborious of its assailants.

He asserts that (1.) "the inspection of various editions and the copious collations of the Hebrew text, with a great number of MSS. collected from all parts of the world by the laudable industry and extensive researches of Kennicott and De Rossi, and other learned men, have proved that the sacred classics are no more exempt from various readings than the profane; (2.) that *hence* the Hebrew copies are equally obnoxious to adulteration as the Greek; (3.) but that the Hebrew copies afforded greater facilities and opportunities of adulteration than the Greek, for in the course of the Jewish war, until the final destruction of Jerusalem, and expulsion of the Jews from Judæa in the reign of Adrian, vast numbers of the Hebrew copies must have been lost or destroyed, besides those that were taken away by the conquerors among other spoils, and the few that were left were confined in great measure to the Jews themselves, as the Hebrew language was not in general use like the Greek. Whereas of the Greek copies, even if all that were possessed by the Hellenistic Jews, not only in Palestine but throughout the world, had been destroyed, which was far from being the case, yet the copies of the LXX. in the possession of the Christians everywhere rendered any material adulteration of the Greek text, at least in so important a case as that of the genealogies, well nigh impossible; (4.) also, the temptation to adulteration was greater in the Hebrew than in the Greek, after the first destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, A.D. 70, the Jews were so oppressed by their national calamities that they could think of nothing else for a time, but about the end of the first century of the vulgar era they were roused to oppose the wonderful progress of Christianity. What principally excited their rage and vexation was, that their own Scriptures were turned into artillery against them, to prove that Jesus was ^{not} the Christ from the days of the apostles (Acts xviii. 24). ^{in order to bring the} Septuagint Vulgate version, which was ^{referred to by the} used by the Christians, into disrepute, amongst other things mentioned, they set up three other Greek versions in opposition thereto from

their curtailed Hebrew text;^{*} (5.) the motive which led the Jews to mutilate the patriarchal genealogies is most clearly exposed by Ephrem Syrus, who died A.D. 378. "The Jews," says he, "have subtracted six hundred years from the generations of Adam, Seth, etc., in order that their own books might not convict them concerning the coming of Christ; he having been predicted to appear for the deliverance of mankind after 5500 years;" but although the corruption of the Hebrew genealogies began as early as Aquila's version, A.D. 128, yet it does not appear to have made any considerable progress for two centuries after. Indeed, the shorter computation did not prevail in the Hebrew Bibles until a good while after his death, for Eusebius, who died A.D. 340, "found in the Hebrew copies which he consulted, different accounts of the times, some following the longer, others the shorter computation."^m

Now we hope it will not be deemed affectation to disown that this array of allegation has to us the least alarming appearance. In defiance of it all, we hesitate not to contend that it is much more reasonable to believe that the Septuagint was altered from the short to the long computation, as it is called, than the Hebrew in the reverse direction.

We esteem it, in the first place, a "scant measure" of equity to pronounce on the text of the Hebrew, as revised by Kennicott and De Rossi, the judgment we have repeated,—that "the sacred classics are *no more* exempt from various readings than the profane." It leaves, at least, the general reader at perfect liberty to imagine that those learned men may have discovered that that text has been exceedingly corrupted. It does not inform him that, considering the innumerable minute peculiarities of the Hebrew character, and the vast extent of the collations of those Hebrew scholars, it is almost wonderful that the number of differences in the text has been so small; and more certainly still, that they have been, with very few and slight exceptions, of such insignificant import,ⁿ so that "no work has descended to the present day so free from alteration as the Hebrew Bible."^o

But the next assertion, that "*hence* the Hebrew copies are equally obnoxious to adulteration as the Greek," does much greater violence to our convictions, both as *an inference* from the former, and in the measure of its comparison of the two authorities. We are, on the contrary, that the Greek has been much more obnoxious to adulteration than the Hebrew.

^{*} Hales's *Anal.*, vol. i., pp. 275, 276.

ⁱ Vol. i., p. 278.

^m Hales's *Anal.*, vol. i., p. 278.

ⁿ Bishop Marsh, Lect. ix., 221—2

^o Ibid., Lect. i., 57.

from the circumstances by which it was surrounded, and from the contrast between them actually observable.

The reader is requested to understand, and to retain in memory, that the Septuagint version of the Old Testament was incomparably more used among both Jews and Christians, in the age to which our attention is directed, than the Hebrew original. The numbers of the people who could read the one and not the other were beyond measure disproportionate. It may be perfectly true that the facilities for the corruption of the Hebrew were greater than for the corruption of the Septuagint, inasmuch as the number of copies to be altered was immeasurably less; the copies also were much more concealed from public observation owing to the prevalent ignorance of the language in which they were written; and as they were in the hands of a few, their adulteration might the more easily escape detection. But whatever might be the excess of "*facility*" on one side, there was far more "*temptation*" to adulterate that version than the sacred text which it professed to interpret, and most certainly there was facility enough in all conscience for taking liberties in its depravation. In the first place, as to the "*temptation*" to vitiate. It has been urged that the Jews, at the commencement of the Christian era, were vexed and enraged that their own "*Scriptures*" were turned into artillery against them, to prove that Jesus was indeed the Christ, from the days of the apostles" (Acts xviii. 28). To avoid confusion of ideas, in this instance it is necessary to observe that it was through the medium of the Septuagint that almost all this annoyance to the Jews was effected by "*their own Scriptures.*" The Greek, not the Hebrew, was the powerful instrument of conversion and edification to Jew and Gentile. It was the Greek, too, from which it must have been the desire of the Christian to derive instruction. If there were any temptation at all to alter in any way the Old Testament, among either Jews or Christians, it must be the Greek translation, upon which all imaginary corrections or improvements would be made. There could be little or no temptation to alter the Hebrew, which might be said, by fair comparison, to be laid upon the shelf.

And, secondly, there was probably as much "*facility*" as temptation. In spite of the notoriety of the Greek version, there most unquestionably was at least *sufficient* facility for its being adulterated to an indefinite extent. There certainly was this facility, because it is universally agreed that alterations in the text of the Septuagint were very considerable, both in number and significance. It was in a very corrupted state that the text of that volume came into the hands of one of its most

learned correctors. When Origen "observed differences between the Hebrew and the Greek, he does not appear to have suspected that those differences arose from any other cause than alterations in the latter."² A learned writer also of the present day,—an advocate of the Septuagint chronology,—admits in a treatise on that particular subject, that "with respect to the probability of accuracy arising from the state of the text, the Hebrew certainly has the advantage, and that the text of the Septuagint shews signs of a carelessness that would *almost permit change*;"³ and not to multiply authorities on a point which is indisputable, even Dr. Hales (who makes a most inadvertent misapplication of the testimony in direct opposition to its plain signification) has produced the evidence of Justin Martyr, as to several alterations or erasures by the Jews of the prophecies relative to the *divinity, passion, and death* of Christ, out of the copies of the Septuagint Vulgate version used in their synagogues. "Your rabbis," says he to Trypho, "have absolutely expunged many passages out of the Septuagint version, as I would have you to know. Still I will argue with you even from those received passages which ye admit, which, if your rabbis had understood, be assured they would have expunged them."

It certainly has been "conjectured" and believed by Ephræem Syrus, a Christian bishop of the East, who died about 378 A.D., that the alterations of the chronology of the Old Testament were made by the Jews in the original. His words are: "The Jews have subtracted six hundred years from the generations of Adam, Seth, etc., in order that their own books might not convict them concerning the coming of Christ, he having been predicted to appear for the deliverance of mankind after 5500 years."⁴

This passage in his writings refers to a constructive prediction of the Jews and Christians about the time of Christ. It was believed by the cabbalistic Jews and by Christians, partly on the six days of the creation being followed by the day of rest, and on the superstitious notion that the six alephs in Gen. i. 1, signified the six thousand years before the advent, which was an element in the so-called millenary theory. This theory was much believed by primitive Christians of distinction. Ephræem Syrus appears to have been one of its adherents. He would then naturally believe in the Septuagint chronology, and might have been easily induced to lay its adulteration in the Hebrew to the charge of the Jews. But it is acknowledged by one of

² Bishop Marsh, *ibid.*, 57.

³ *Bib. Dict. Chron.*, p. 320.

⁴ Hales, vol. i., p. 277. Justin Martyr Trypho, near the end of first day's dialogue.

Hales, vol. i., p. 278.

our most learned and judicious opponents, that "the cause of the alterations is most uncertain. It has indeed been conjectured," he says, "that the Jews shortened the chronology in order that an ancient prophecy, that the Messiah should come in the sixth millenary of the world's age, might not be known to be fulfilled in the advent of our Lord. The reason," he adds, "may be sufficient in itself, but it does not rest upon sufficient evidence."

Now we venture to assert that it is *much more reasonable* for our contemporaries to *conjecture* that the chronology of the Septuagint was altered by the Alexandrian Jews, to adapt their system to the Egyptian pretensions to antiquity, and by primitive Christians to make the system agree with the commonly received prediction, on three accounts most especially:—

1. Because it can be perceived with a little ingenuity, by an examination of the text, what were probably the motives which urged them to each particular change of the disputed passages;" 2, because we know that the Septuagint was corrupted in a great degree; and 3, because it is acknowledged by friends and foes, that the Hebrew text was preserved by the Jews with the most religious care and scrupulous exactness."

It may be thought that an objection to the Hebrew text, which remains unnoticed, is alone fatal to its credibility. It appears impossible not to believe that Hebrew manuscripts of the longer computation did exist in some part of the first centuries of the Christian era, because Eusebius, who died A.D. 340, found in the Hebrew copies which he consulted different accounts of the times, some following the longer, others the shorter computation."

But this statement may be admitted to be true without the slightest invalidation of our argument. It may be that in those early days some copyists were found who would trifle with the Hebrew in its dates, as well as others with its versions—exceptions were discovered to the general rule. But this is a matter of no serious consequence. The great point for consideration is not what contradictions of the Hebrew might exist in the commencement of our era, but the singular agreement which belongs to those copies that have been actually transmitted to posterity

¹ *Bib. Dict. Chron.*, vol. i., p. 319.

² Faussett, *Sac. Chron.*, chap. 1.

³ *Josephus contra Apion*, i. 8. *Bib. Dict. Chron.* (U) Poole, "with respect to the probability of accuracy arising from *indisputable* of the text, the Hebrew certainly has the advantage. There is every reason to think the rabbins have been scrupulous in the extreme in making alterations." Also Marsh, *Lect.* i., 57.

⁴ Hales, vol. i., p. 278.

through succeeding generations. It is very probable, and not to be wondered at, that there were Jews, and Christians likewise, who were nothing loth to alter the Hebrew to suit their purposes, as well as the Greek, when they had the opportunity. But it is very well known that there have existed in every age of the Christian dispensation most vigilant and careful guardians of the integrity of the Hebrew text, in all its essentials, to as great an extent as was compatible with their powers. There were the learned Jews of Tiberias, the Karaïtes, and the later Masorets. "Tiberias, in Galilee, was the seat of Jewish learning. It was the residence of the best Hebrew scholars, the repository of the best Hebrew manuscripts." The learned Jews of Tiberias in the third and fourth centuries must have had access to Hebrew manuscripts which were written before the birth of Christ. We know that they sought and collated them. "We know that their exertions to obtain an accurate text were equal to their endeavours to preserve it." The materials of Jewish criticism are contained in the Masora. "This collection was formed at Tiberias." In what century it was begun is not positively known, but certainly not sooner than the fourth, and probably not sooner than the fifth century. "That the integrity of the Hebrew text, from the time when it was fixed by the authors of the Masora, has been as strictly preserved to the *present* age as it is *possible* to preserve an ancient work, is a position which no longer admits of doubt." And as to the Masoretic text being itself an accurate copy of the sacred writings, the author from whose works we are making these extracts, taking into consideration what is known of the labours of these learned Jews, asks, in conclusion, "Why then shall we conclude that they laboured in vain?"^s

There is no reason for believing that any interval intervened in which one or other of these most loyal votaries to divine truth have not watched over and preserved with the greatest jealousy the purity of the Word of God. They, the Jews of Tiberias, the Karaïtes and the Masorites, may reasonably be believed to have been instruments in the hand of Providence, of transmitting from century to century, and, except in early times, without any co-existing adulterations, the Jewish Scriptures to ourselves in their substantial originality.

III. We commence another stage of our discursory journey by venturing to assert, that if there is any extant matter for the refutation of ~~indubitable~~ Jewish verity, it is to be found in internal disagreements of the Bible with facts, and in its inconsistencies

^s Marsh, Lect. ii., pp. 64, 65; Lect. ix., pp. 223, 224.

with itself. And it appears to be imagined by some persons, that unanswerable accusations have been preferred against it of these very kinds. We have no hesitation in professing ourselves not among the discerners of those difficulties. We doubt not they are inventions rather than discoveries. We hope our eye is single. It will be well however to consider a little, at least, the chief objections which have been urged with the greatest vehemence, and which appear to have produced conviction, in some instances, on learned minds.

Several of these objections we feel it almost a condescension to notice after the answers which those of them that have ever required answer, have already received. We mean particularly Dr. Hales's "glaring anachronism" (vol. i., p. 220), which we refer to Faussett (p. 15), and his "dishonest management" of 410 years, which we scarcely know whither not to refer for its correction to 424, and his "centenary addition" still found in the sixth, eighth, and ninth generations of Jared, and Methuselah, and Lamech. From which he argues that, because the Hebrew chronology is consistent with its date of the deluge, it was cunningly devised, which is surely no argument at all (p. 281). We shall really not think it necessary or expedient to answer more than a very few objections which have not been answered as we think sufficiently, as they have been resuscitated to notoriety and unreal importance by the reputation and rank of recent writers of modern criticism.

The first that we adduce as coming early in the order of time, is the alleged impossibility of the existence of the extensive empire of Nimrod, in the period assigned by the Jewish Scriptures to its erection. But we see no impediment to joining issue with the framers of this objection on both its points.

We can perceive from the Hebrew Scriptures no extent of the empire under consideration, incompatible with the time which they allow for its coming into existence.

It appears as if the objectors imagine that the Assyrian empire must have attained very considerable magnitude in or about one hundred and twenty years after the deluge. But it may be asked, where is any assertion or insinuation of the kind in the Sacred Volume? That that empire should have thrown out many of its ramifications before the dispersion of mankind, because they are mentioned in the chapter preceding that which relates their dispersion, is a gratuitous assumption. It seems to us to be something more than unreasonable. It appears to be a contradiction to certain statements in the narrative (Gen. x. 10, 11, 20, compared with xi. 1, 2, 8). That Nimrod was mighty, at least comparatively with his contemporaries, is not to

be denied, but there is no evidence that we are aware of, that he did more than lay the foundation of his greatness, at or even later than the supposed objectionable epoch. Indeed, it is expressly written that he began to be mighty without fixing the precise date of his extraordinary power. And certainly there is no proof from the Scriptures that even Babylon itself rose in its gigantic proportions at a very early period, unless it must be supposed that we cannot apply to the building of that city the proverbial denial of a sudden erection to the capital of an ancient empire nearer home.

It is very easy to believe that Nimrod achieved real greatness before the termination of his career, and not necessary to imagine that he exhibited that greatness so early as our objectors have supposed. He may have arrived at manhood at no very advanced period of the history, but if we turn to the record which Moses has left us of the generations of Shem, it is extremely credible that the founder of the empire of Assyria lived after the flood two or three or even four hundred years. And Mr. Stuart Poole has said, "It is most reasonable to suppose the Noachian colonists to have begun to spread about three centuries after that event," a space amply sufficient for a vast increase of population, for the institution of an extensive dominion, and for the high cultivation of the arts, in the descendants of the post-diluvian progenitor of the human race; especially when we consider their early proficiency in manual operations; and these circumstances include, if we mistake not, all the principal facts in their case, which the Scriptures would require us to place within the limits of credibility.

There are only three more objections raised in this division of our subject to which we purpose to extend our attention, and to them principally for this reason, that they have been elevated to some new title to consideration by the opinions of recent essayists and commentators.

The first is the alleged disagreement between 1 Kings vi. 1 and Acts xiii. 20. St. Paul, it is well known, is made by some interpreters to declare that the judges governed the Jews for four hundred and fifty years; a period which is believed to be perfectly inconsistent with 1 Kings vi. 1. We believe that the words of St. Paul are not to be so interpreted. His words, as they are translated in our Bibles, certainly have a very strong appearance to that effect, but it appears almost impossible to interpret them otherwise. It may first be observed that in the original the words are not clear and unambiguous. It may rather be

Bib. Dict. Chron., vol. i., p. 328.

Revised
1015, *with* *for* *in* *2nd* *line*
7500
480
7500 *2nd* *line* *1491*

said that St. Paul avoided expressing himself in the sense imputed to him with that unambiguity. In fact, such an unequivocal assertion is one thing exactly which St. Paul did *not* make.

It may be further observed that there exist already, at least, three interpretations of his original words which may not unlikely contain the solution of the difficulty.

It has been asked, by way of objection to an argument used by Calovius, and Mill, and (it may have been intended) by Ussher, whose is one of the three interpretations of which we have a high opinion, "Why" interpret the events which happened in four hundred and fifty years, *if* before the judges, from the "birth of Isaac?" It appears to us not at all an improbable point for the commencement of the Apostle's era. It is surely not unreasonable to intend that the "fathers were chosen" in that patriarch to whom the choice was limited as a branch of the seed of Abraham (Gen. xxi. 12; Gal. iv. 28), and who was at the same time the representative of Him of whom they were the chosen progenitors, and of whose nativity St. Paul was designing, as he spoke, to make a direct statement. We conceive it is more reasonable to regard this interpretation, or either of the two others, as an elucidation of St. Paul's meaning; or to think that modern critics fail in the comprehension of the problem, rather than to conclude St. Paul was ignorant of a period in chronology with which he must in reason be supposed to be familiar; or that St. Luke, himself a learned man, should have been a party to a palpable misrepresentation.

Another pretended error lies in a passage of the speech of St. Stephen (Acts vii.), connected with the chronology of the Hebrew; the fault being imputed to the latter authority. The imputation appears to us to be utterly unfounded. It arises from supposing that Terah was only seventy years of age when Abram was born. Ussher has shewn that he had attained the age of one hundred and thirty years.* This correction completely removes the appearance of disagreement between the Old and New Testaments upon the point. It has certainly been objected by a recent writer of distinction, that if it were true that Terah was one hundred and thirty years old when Abram was born to him, it is very unaccountable that Abraham should wonder that he himself should have a child at the age of one hundred (Gen. xvii. 17), "Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old, and shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear?" Abraham appears to us not to mean by these expressions

* Uss., *Chron Sac.*, cap. xli.

* *Chron. Sac.*, cap. vii.

that it exceeded his belief that a centenarian should increase the number of his family. Such procreation must have been familiar to him, not only in the case of Terah, but in the whole line of his immediate ancestry, and not many years before had actually occurred in his own person. He evidently speaks of himself with reference to his wife, and we think that reason warrants the opinion that he expresses his astonishment that he and Sarah should be blessed with a progeny, after that they had lived together many years, each to a great age, in total infecundity.

And what makes this view of the matter the more presumable is, that the divine answer to Abraham's inquiry refers chiefly, if not solely, to Sarah's powers of generation, as if that were the principal or sole point of Abraham's uncertainty.

Our review of the sceptical objections of modern times might be deemed very incomplete if we pass entirely without remark an observation which appears of late to have caused increased dissatisfaction in enlightened and serious minds. Nothing seems to excite greater doubts, even of the inspiration of Scripture, than that that Word which professes to be inspired by the God of nature should be proved by scientific discovery to be in contradiction to works of the same Almighty power. We need scarcely say that we are alluding to the solemn declaration in Joshua x. 12, 13, of the suspension of the motion of that orb in the heavens which science has proved to be always stationary. Here is a direct contradiction, in the professed Word of God, to a fact which we know of His works. It appears to have brought the inspiration of Scripture, in some degree at least, into grave suspicion. Apologies, we know, have been invented of different kinds. Revelation is not intended to teach science. Writers may reveal divinity without the knowledge of physics. Still the awkward circumstance remains. A declaration is made contrary to fact. And is it possible that such a declaration can have proceeded from the omniscient source of truth?

In answer to this question, we think it reasonable to believe that the declaration has been designedly suffered by God to be written by the instruments of His revelation. We will slightly endeavour to vindicate our opinion. For the reason which has been assigned, it is perfectly certain that the sun never revolves round the earth, and, therefore, cannot be arrested in such a revolution. But for precisely the same reason it is known that the same lumina^r never rises and never sets. Nevertheless, there are, perhaps, fewer than a hundred texts in Scripture where it is declared or implied that the sun does move in one or other of those directions. Now we hold it cannot be maintained, with reason, that it is inconsistent with the attributes of the

Deity to allow human expressions to be admitted into the Bible in accommodation to the universal, but erroneous, notion of such common apparent phenomena of nature as the rising and setting of the sun. And yet to avow or direct the cessation of the motion of the sun on Gibeon is not more contrary to fact than either of those expressions. And there is no more reason for thinking that God would not suffer His prophets to say (what they believed) that the sun stood still, than that He would not prevent them to speak of its ascending above the horizon in the morning, and descending below it at the close of day.

And here we terminate our labours. We are ourselves satisfied, and we hope we may have at least contributed to satisfy our readers that no obstacle lies, at least, in the Egyptian history, or in the Hebrew Bible, or in the Septuagint Version (professedly the three most fruitful sources of objection), to believing that the chronology of the authorized translation of the Old Testament is sanctioned by divine authority.

E. C. K.

